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E.O. 12356: DECL: NOVEMBER 30 1988
TAGS: ASEC, HOPS, PINS, PINT, PINR, SOPN, MILI, US, AF
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT, NOV. 22-29, 1982

✓ REF: KABUL 1902

1. (C.-ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE USED IN BRIEFING THE PRESS, PROTECTING SOURCES WHERE INDICATED.

3. SUMMARY: NEWS OF THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR REACHED KABUL FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AS NOVEMBER DREW TO A CLOSE. THE BEST SOURCED SINGLE REPORT WE HAVE HAD OF THE SLAHAG TUNNEL DISASTER SUGGESTS THAT SOMETHING LESS THAN 1000 PEOPLE DIED OF ASPHYXIATION THERE BUT THAT THERE WAS NO ATTEMPT BY SOVIET TROOPS TO BLOCK THE TUNNEL ENTRANCES OR FIGHTING OF ANY KIND WITH THE MUJAHIDEEN. IN KABUL, EVENTS WERE DOMINATED BY A PAIR OF DAMAGING EXPLOSIONS AT THE PAMIR BUILDING ON NOVEMBER 24, THE SECOND ACT OF SABOTAGE AGAINST THAT INSTALLATION IN THE PAST MONTH. THERE WAS LOSS OF LIFE, AND PROPERTY DAMAGE WAS EXTENSIVE. ALTHOUGH THE MEDIA REMAINED SILENT ABOUT A SECOND BLAST ON NOVEMBER 27 IN THE COMPOUND HOUSING THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, THE PAMIR BLAST WAS EXTENSIVELY PUBLICIZED, AND THE REGIME'S POLICY HAS SWITCHED FROM SILENCE TO PORTRAYING THE MUJAHIDEEN AS BANDITS WHOSE ACTS ARE REPUGNANT TO THE RELIGION IT CLAIMS TO BE DEFENDING. IN THE AREA AROUND THE CITY, SOVIET AND REGIME FORCES CONDUCTED A
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SEEMINGLY POINTLESS ONE-DAY STRIKE AGAINST THE TOWN OF PAGHHAN, AND COMMUNIST PARTY FIGHTERS, DISGUISED AS MEMBERS OF GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR'S HEZB-E-ISLAMI BATTLED A COALITION OF RESISTANCE FORCES IN THE SHOMALI TOWN OF ESTALEF FOR TWO WEEKS. FARTHER AFIELD, THE SECURITY SITUATION FOR REGIME AND SOVIET FORCES IN GHAZNI IS DIFFICULT. AN AMMUNITION DEPOT, AN ARMORED VEHICLE AND A BUS HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP IN THE CITY IN RECENT DAYS, AND SOVIET SOLDIERS ARE FORCED TO DO THEIR SHOPPING IN THREES SO THAT TWO MAY COVER THEIR COMPANION WITH DRAWN WEAPONS

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AS HE DOES THEIR BUSINESS. FINALLY, THERE IS CONFIRMATION OF EARLIER REPORTS THAT THE SOVIET PETROLEUM PIPELINE WAS RUPTURED IN THE VICINITY OF POL-E-KHOMRI NORTH OF THE SALANG EARLIER IN THE MONTH, AND THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER OF IHAM SAHIB NEAR THE SOVIET BORDER NORTH OF KUNDUZ WAS KILLED ALONG WITH PARTY FIGHTERS IN A MAJOR BATTLE AGAINST THE MUJAHIDEEN AROUND NOVEMBER 10. END SUMMARY.

4. ANOTHER NOTE ON THE SALANG TUNNEL DISASTER: PLEASE PROTECT BOTH SOURCES OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION: AN AFGHAN WHO WAS IN A BUS IN THE SALANG TUNNEL WHEN THE ACCIDENT OCCURRED THERE ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 3 HAS GIVEN THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPERIENCE TO AN AFGHAN FRIEND WHO IN TURN PASSED IT ON TO US. THE ACCIDENT TOOK PLACE WHEN A SOUTHBOUND PETROLEUM TANK TRUCK COLLIDED WITH THE LEAD ARMORED VEHICLE IN A NORTHBOUND SOVIET CONVOY OF ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION WHICH CONSUMED OXYGEN INSIDE THE TUNNEL, AND THE DANGER WAS HEIGHTENED BECAUSE THE TUNNEL'S EXHAUST SYSTEM WAS NOT FUNCTIONING. NEVERTHELESS, THE SOURCE, WHOSE BUS WAS STOPPED NEAR THE SOUTH END OF THE TUNNEL, JOINED FELLOW PASSENGERS WHO IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ACCIDENT WALKED NORTH THROUGH THE TUNNEL PAST THE ACCIDENT AND OUT THE NORTHERN END. OTHERS, INCLUDING THE SOVIETS
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INSIDE THEIR PERSONNEL CARRIERS, STAYED IN THEIR VEHICLES, AND ENGINES WERE KEPT RUNNING AGAINST THE COLD.

5. THE SOURCE DENIED MOST OF THE LURID TALES THAT HAVE MADE THE ROUNDS IN KABUL IN THE THREE WEEKS FOLLOWING THE DISASTER. FIRST OF ALL, HE SAID THAT NO ONE TRIED TO PREVENT HIM AND HIS COMPANIONS FROM LEAVING THE TUNNEL WHEN THEY REACHED THE END, AND HE

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FM AHEMBASSY KABUL

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INFO AHEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

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HAD HEARD OF NO SUCH INCIDENT TAKING PLACE DURING

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THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF THE INCIDENT. FURTHER, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANY SORT OF FIGHTING AFTER THE EXPLOSION HAD OCCURRED, AND THE SOURCE DISMISSED REPORTS THAT THE VICTIMS IN THE DISASTER HAD BEEN PURPOSELY GASSED. DURING HIS ABSENCE FROM THE BUS IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN TRAVELLING, MANY OF THE SOURCE'S PERSONAL ITEMS DISAPPEARED, AND ALTHOUGH HE SUSPECTED THE SOVIETS HAD ROBBED THE VEHICLE, HE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING FOR SURE WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS LOSS.

6. AFTER SPENDING THE NIGHT AT THE NORTH END OF THE TUNNEL, THE SOURCE WALKED BACK TO THE BUS TO RETRIEVE HIS BELONGINGS BEFORE LEAVING THE TUNNEL TO SEEK OTHER TRANSPORTATION TO THE NORTH. MANY BODIES WERE BROUGHT OUT OF THE TUNNEL AND LAID IN THE SNOW ON THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 3. ALSO, THE SOURCE OBSERVED DRIVERS SLUMPED OVER THE WHEELS OF THEIR VEHICLES WHEN HE RETURNED TO HIS BUS THE FOLLOWING DAY.

7. MORE ESTIMATES OF CASUALTIES ARE NOW AVAILABLE. THE SOURCE OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION PUTS THE NUMBER WHO DIED AT 350, BY FAR THE LOWEST ESTIMATED WE HAVE HEARD. BY CONTRAST, ACCORDING TO A WELL-PLACED SOURCE OF A WESTERN EMBASSY HERE (PROTECT BOTH) THE PRELIMINARY FIGURES AVAILABLE TO THE REGIME'S MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT INDICATE THAT SOME 600 AFGHANS AND SOVIETS DIED IN THE DISASTER. THE WESTERN EMBASSY'S SOURCE THOUGHT THAT THIS FIGURE WOULD BE LARGER ONCE THE FINAL TALLY WAS TAKEN. THUS, THIS LATTER ESTIMATE IS MORE IN LINE WITH
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FIGURE OF SOMETHING UNDER 1000 DEATHS THAT IS GENERALLY HEARD IN KABUL.

8. WHILE STILL SECOND HAND, THE ABOVE ACCOUNT OF THE SALANG TUNNEL DISASTER IS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE SINGLE REPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED. IT APPEARS PLAUSIBLE TO US AND TENDS TO BEAR OUT ANOTHER REPORT THAT FOURTEEN SOVIET ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS WERE IN THE TUNNEL WHEN THE COLLISION OCCURRED. IF AS OUR SOURCE BELIEVES, THESE VEHICLES WERE FULL OF TROOPS, THE FIGURE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED SOVIET DEAD WOULD APPEAR TO BE REALISTIC.

9. KABUL: AS NOVEMBER DREW TO A CLOSE, THERE WAS ANOTHER

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SERIES OF BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN KABUL. AROUND SEVEN P.M. ON NOVEMBER 24, AT LEAST TWO BOMBS EXPLODED IN AND NEAR THE ELEVEN-STORY PAMIR BUILDING IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY. REGIME PRESS ACCOUNTS OF THE INCIDENT AND THOSE OF PERSONS WHO VISITED THE SITE OF THE BLAST THE NEXT DAY AGREE THAT DAMAGE TO THE BUILDING AND TO A NEARBY SHOPPING ARCADE WHERE THE SECOND BOMB EXPLODED, WAS EXTENSIVE WITH MANY SHOPS COMPLETELY GUTTED AND WITH LARGE CHUNKS OF CEMENT BLOWN FROM THE BUILDING LITTERING THE STREET NEARBY. THE OFFICIAL CASUALTY TOLL WAS FIVE KILLED AND 47 INJURED, AND "MILLIONS OF AFGHANIS" OF PROPERTY WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN LOST. THE TARGET OF THE BOMBING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A PARTY HEADQUARTERS LOCATED ON THE BUILDING'S SECOND FLOOR WHERE TWO BOMBS MAY HAVE BEEN PLANTED IN THE STAIRWELLS, AS WELL AS THE FOURTH FLOOR HEADQUARTERS OF THE STATE TRADING COMPANY, AFGHAN KART. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME IN A MONTH THAT THE PAMIR BUILDING HAS BEEN BOMBED.

10. ALSO, ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 27, A BOMB EXPLODED IN THE CENTRALLY LOCATED COMPOUND WHICH HOUSES THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, ONE OF THE CITY'S MANY JAILS, AND OTHER INSTALLATIONS OF THE SECURITY FORCES. THE AREA WAS CORDONED OFF FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT, BUT LIFE IN THE NEIGH-
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NEIGHBOORHOOD HAS NOW RETURNED TO NORMAL. NO ACCOUNT OF THIS BOMBING, NOR OF OTHER BLASTS HEARD AROUND TOWN THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, HAS YET BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE REGIME'S MEDIA, AND THE EXTENT OF CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE IS NOT YET KNOWN.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1130

INFO AHEHDASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

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11. SINCE THE NOVEMBER 11 BOMBING OF PARTY HANGOUTS IN

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THE WELL-TO-DO AREA OF KABUL, THE REGIME HAS ABANDONED ITS POLICY OF TRYING TO IGNORE BREACHES OF SECURITY AND HAS SOUGHT TO DISCREDIT THE RESISTANCE BY PUBLICIZING THE INCIDENTS AND BY STRESSING THEIR UN-ISLAMIC NATURE. THE MEDIA CARRIED VIVID PICTURES OF THE PAMIR INCIDENT AND ALSO GAVE PUBLICITY TO THE VIOLENT DEATH OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF ITS ISLAMIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT. THIS OFFICIAL WAS APPARENTLY SHOT BY A BOY WHEN HE ANSWERED A KNOCK AT HIS DOOR, BUT THE MEDIA REPORTED THAT HE HAD BEEN KILLED WHILE AT PRAYER IN ONE OF THE CITY'S MAIN MOSQUES. ALSO, TO STRESS FURTHER THE RESISTANCE'S FAILURE TO RESPECT HEN OF THE CLOTH, ONE OF THE REGIME'S DAILY NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED A LIST OF 19 CLERICS SAID TO HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED SINCE THE COMMUNIST COUP D'ETAT IN APRIL 1978. WHILE THE NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS FIGURES WHO WERE MURDERED AFTER BEING CO-OPTED BY THE REGIME IS IN FACT BELIEVED TO BE MUCH HIGHER THAN 19, THE REPORT SUPPORTS OTHER EVIDENCE THAT, FROM NOW ON, A CENTRAL THEME IN OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA WILL BE TO PORTRAY THE HOLY WAR AS UNHOLY AND ITS WARRIORS AS GODLESS BANDITS.

12. PAGHMAN: CONTINUED SOVIET AND REGIME DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SITUATION IN AND AROUND THE TOWN OF PAGHMAN FIFTEEN KILOMETERS NORTHWEST OF KABUL WAS MANIFEST DURING THE WEEK WHEN A LARGE COMBINED REGIME/SOVIET FORCE MADE A ONE-DAY FORAY INTO THE TOWN ON NOVEMBER 23. THE ATTACK WAS PRECEDED BY THE CUSTOMARY HELICOPTER AND MIG BOMBARDMENT, BUT AFTER A DAY'S FIGHTING, THE TROOPS WITHDREW. AS USUAL, SOURCES SYMPATHETIC TO THE RESISTANCE (PROTECT) REPORT THAT MANY SOVIET AND REGIME TROOPS PERISHED IN THIS SEEMINGLY POINTLESS ATTACK. WE ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT AT LEAST ONE ARMORED VEHICLE WAS DESTROYED BY THE MUJAHIDEEN AT KHOJE MOSAFER BETWEEN
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KABUL AND PAGHMAN.

13. ESTALEF: ACCORDING TO A SOURCE (PROTECT) WITH GOOD CONNECTIONS IN THE SHOMALI TOWN OF ESTALEF 40 KILOMETERS NORTH OF KABUL, THE LATEST REPORTED FIGHTING BETWEEN RESISTANCE GROUPS THERE WAS IN FACT A REGIME-INSPIRED OPERATION. CONTRARY TO EARLIER INDICATIONS THAT MUJAHIDEEN LOYAL TO GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR'S HEZB-E-ISLAMI HAD ATTACKED THE COALITION OF ESTALEF RESISTANCE GROUPS LED BY THE JAHIAH-E-ISLAMI, IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE ATTACKERS WERE COMMUNIST PARTY FIGHTERS DISGUISED AS HEZB-E-ISLAMI GUERRILLAS THE ATTACKING "MUJAHIDEEN" ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN WELL ARMED AND TO

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HAVE USED MORTARS AGAINST THEIR OPPONENTS IN A BATTLE WHICH LASTED ABOUT TWO WEEKS BEFORE ENDING AROUND NOVEMBER 25. CASUALTY AND OTHER DAMAGE REPORTS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE, BUT IT APPEARS THAT THE JAHIAI-LED COALITION REMAINS IN CONTROL OF MOST OF THE AREA AROUND ESTALEF.

14. GHAZNI: RECENT VISITORS TO GHAZNI (PROTECT) REPORT THAT THE RESISTANCE IN THAT TOWN IS AS ACTIVE AS EVER AND THAT MAJOR ATTACKS ON REGIME INSTALLATIONS AND EQUIPMENT ARE COMMON-PLACE. ON NOVEMBER 20, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MUJAHIDEEN MORTARED A REGIME AMMUNITION DUMP LOCATED IN AN OLD FORTRESS NOT FAR FROM THE CENTER OF THE TOWN AND SUCCEEDED IN BLOWING UP A CONSIDERABLE QUANTITY OF AMMUNITION. INJURIES IN THE STRUCTURE, PART OF WHICH REMAINED STANDING AFTER THE EXPLOSION, WERE SAID *TO HAVE BEEN LIMITED DESPITE THE HEAVY MATERIAL DAMAGE. TWO* DAYS EARLIER, A REGIME ARMORED VEHICLE WAS DESTROYED AND THREE OF ITS OCCUPANTS KILLED WHEN IT STRUCK A LAND MINE ON A STREET INSIDE THE TOWN. A BUS WHICH TRIED TO DETOUR AROUND THE WRECK HIT WITH A SIMILAR FATE ON A MINE EVIDENTLY PLANTED TO MEET SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. THE ROAD BETWEEN KABUL AND GHAZNI IS EQUALLY HAZARDOUS. A SOURCE WHO MADE A TRIP IN RECENT DAYS REPORTED SEEING FOUR BUSES WHICH HAD BEEN BLOWN UP ON MINES.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1131

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15. IN THIS SITUATION, THE SOVIET SOLDIERS GARRISONED IN
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ONE OF THE TOWN'S PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS ARE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS WHEN THEY MOVE ABOUT IN THE STREETS. THEIR STANDARD PRACTICE WHEN SHOPPING, FOR EXAMPLE, IS TO TRAVEL IN GROUPS OF THREE. THIS ENABLES TWO MEN TO STAND GUARD. OUTSIDE A SHOP THEY ARE VISITING WHILE THE THIRD GOES INSIDE TO TRANSACT THEIR BUSINESS.

16. DESPITE THE DIFFICULT SECURITY SITUATION, FOODSTUFFS ARE REPORTED TO BE IN GOOD SUPPLY IN GHAZNI, AND PRICES, FOR THE MOST PART, ARE IN LINE WITH THOSE PREVALENT IN KABUL. AN INDICATION OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE POPULATION TOWARDS THE RESISTANCE IS THAT KNOWN MUJAHIDEEN ARE AUTOMATICALLY GIVEN A DISCOUNT ON MANY OF THE GOODS THEY BUY.

17. THE NORTH: AN AFGHAN SOURCE (PROTECT) WHO VISITED THE NORTHERN TOWN OF KUNDUZ IN MID-NOVEMBER REPORTS THAT THE TOWN IS RELATIVELY CALM BY DAY BUT THAT NOCTURNAL GUNFIRE SUGGESTS THAT THE RESISTANCE IS ACTIVE IN THE REGION. AT THE TIME OF THE SOURCE'S VISIT TO THE NORTH, THERE WAS REPORTEDLY A SHARP BATTLE BETWEEN RESISTANCE AND REGIME FORCES IN THE DISTRICT OF IHAN SAHIB FIFTY KILOMETERS NORTH OF KUNDUZ IN WHICH THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER AND A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF PARTY WORKERS WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN KILLED. THE SOURCE ALSO CONFIRMED EARLIER REPORTING THAT THE SOVIET PETROLEUM PIPELINE RUNNING SOUTH FROM THE BORDER AT HAIRATAN TO THE DASHT-E-KALAGAI AND BAGRAM BASES HAD BEEN SABOTAGED SOMEWHERE NEAR POL-E-KHOMRI TO THE NORTH OF THE SALANG. ALL TRAFFIC MOVING NORTH TO KUNDUZ FROM POL-E-KHOMRI WAS HALTED FOR SEVERAL DAYS BECAUSE OF THE FIGHTING WHICH FOLLOWED THIS INCIDENT. AS PREVIOUSLY NOTED, THE PIPELINE WAS ALSO RUPTURED IN CHARIKAR SIXTY
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KILOMETERS NORTH OF KABUL AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME. THE TWO ATTACKS ON THE PIPELINE ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TO COME TO OUR ATTENTION IN RECENT MONTHS.
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